35th Szeged International Biblical Conference

***Lectio divina, lectio humana.* Spiritual exegesis in the history of the Church from the beginning to the present day.**

Venue: Szeged Visitor Centre, Dóm tér

Date planned: 26th-28th August 2024

Patrons: **Dr László Kiss-Rigó**, Szeged-Csanád diocesan bishop, **Prof Dr Levente Balázs Martos,** Auxiliary bishop of Esztergom **Prof Dr Szabolcs Szuromi**, rector emeritus (PPKE), **Prof Dr Martin Meiser** University of Saarland, **Prof Dr Imre Kocsis** Pázmány Péter Catholic University, **Dr Ferenc Janka**, deputy rector of Gál Ferenc University, Prof **Dr Ottó Pecsuk**, President of the Ecumenical Bible Society, **Dr Zoltán Kustár**, President of Debrecen Reformed University of Theology. **Dr Izsák Baán**, Prior of St Mauricius Monastery in Bakonybél. **Dr Habil Görföl Tibor** Professor at St. Atanaz Greek Catholic Theological College.

*Lectio divina* means "sacred reading". Initially, the Bible was read as a divine message by Jews and Christians alike. The Christian readers of the Hebrew Bible and the early Christian church fathers wanted to read the sacred message out of the biblical texts by means of an allegorical interpretation inherited from Homer's commentaries. The writers of the New Testament not only quote but also interpret the prophetic texts in a new context (Acts 8:26-39). This way of reading, later popularised by Benedict of Nursia (AD 480-547), begins with *lectio*, continues with meditation and *oratio*, and ends with contemplation and some active action.

Since the Enlightenment, readers have increasingly looked less and less for a sacred message in biblical texts and more for parallels between Jewish and Christian history, ethnography, and the history of religion, and for confirmation or refutation of the scientific worldview. Although the germs of modern exegetical methods can also be found in spiritual reading, in the 19th and 20th centuries historical-critical exegesis and *lectio divina* often confronted each other: the former became the almost exclusive analytical method in academic teaching, alongside other critical readings based on it, while *lectio divina* dominated the pulpit. Among other things, Joseph Ratzinger's 1983 work and the Vatican document "Scripture Explanation in the Church" published in 1993 by the Biblical Commission warned of this painful contradiction.

Since explanations of the lectio divina type are also interpretations, they are classified among the ways of historical understanding of revelation. What we want to examine is what in these texts is an actualization of divine revelation, what is an insight bound to the times, and what is a message that is still relevant today. We will explore the philosophical thinking and worldview behind the writings of each author and the impact they had on their time and on posterity.

We would like to focus on a few questions. It seems that the Orthodox Church's exegesis has almost canonised patristic exegesis. But what does it mean in the 21st century to read the sacred message out of the biblical texts from the "heart of the fathers"?

While cultivating dogmatic exegesis, which has been present since the time of the Reformation, how do the disputing parties simultaneously search for methods to discover the sacred message, the spiritual message in the heat of disputes? What is the relationship between the interpretations of the Pietist movement and *lectio divina*? Is it possible to read the sacred message using modern "scientific" analyses? Is the *lectio divina* approach anti-scientific?

In Hungary, the Monastery of St Maurice of Bakonybél has published several volumes in its "Lectio divina" series, in collaboration with the publishing house L'Harmattan. Our lecturers are invited to present this important topic through the concrete work of an author.

Please include a brief biography of the author, the name of the original edition of the work under consideration, the modern language edition of the text and, if there is one, a Hungarian translation. We would be grateful if our lecturers could include in their studies secondary literature from Hungary and abroad. We also welcome analyses of writings not only by Catholic, but also by famous Orthodox and Protestant authors, as well as by Jewish biblical scholars. The conference is also interested in the writings of authors who have conflicted with the Catholic Church or another religious community in their own time, especially if these views have had a significant impact in Hungary. In this case, the authors are also asked to indicate whether the insights of the authors under consideration were later accepted or whether their insights led to the formation of sectarian religious groups.

To register for the conference, please send an e-mail with the title of the presentation in Hungarian and German/English [(benyik.gyorgy@gmail.com)](mailto:benyik.gyorgy@gmail.com) or visit the conference website -<http://www.sznbk1988.hu/hu> - higher education lecturers dealing with the topic should register from 10th January to 1st June 2024 by subscribing to the Google spreadsheet on the SZNBK (Szeged International Biblical Conference) website.

Please also send an abstract of your presentation (German/English) by e-mail [(benyik.gyorgy@gmail.com)](mailto:benyik.gyorgy@gmail.com) of up to 1500 characters, including the title of the presentation, the source texts and the main theses of the presentation by 1st June 2024 at the latest.

**At the Conference, lectures should not exceed 20 minutes,** which is followed by a brief and mainly professional debate (a maximum of 10 minutes). On each day of the conference, if there is time, there will be a workshop session where everyone can join in a small group discussion led by the lecturers. One can give their lecture at the conference in Hungarian. However, in this case the speaker must provide for a comprehensive summary in German or in English or should hand out the whole text without footnotes in one of the above languages.

We are planning to publish the lectures presented at the Conference in our conference volume in, about one year after the conference. The extension of the written study should be between 25.000 and 30.000 characters with spaces included. Audio recordings of the presentations as well as the abstracts will be posted on the conference website. **The deadline for sending us the final version of the lecture is 19th November 2024. Please submit the text both in .docx and PDF format.**

In the papers, please use the Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, etc. words in the original language or in Latin letters according to the scientific transcription. **The publication of texts arriving after the 26th November, 2024 may be doubtful.** In case your text extends the abovementioned length, it should be negotiated and permitted by the editor.

**Those who will be lecturers at our Conference for the first time** should also send us their brief scholarly CVs or if it can be found on the internet, please send us the link – it should not exceed 5.000 characters with spaces) mentioning their three most important publications (books) along. We would kindly ask you all to provide us with your scholarly title and your current workplace.

We offer both board and lodging for our lecturers for the time of the conference as well as participation in the cultural programmes free of charge. Persons accompanying our lecturers are not automatically catered for free of charge. Please, inform us as soon as possible and before 1st June 2024 if you have any special requirement concerning meals.

The conference is open to university students/students of theology and those working with the authors or in the field, who will be offered a discounted registration rate.

Please indicate your arrival and departure dates by 1st June 2024 at the latest to ensure smooth organisation.

Once you have applied for attendance, we will send you a registration form to be completed by 1st June 2024. Registration will be complete upon return of the completed form, of which the conference organiser will send a confirmation.

Szeged, 21st September 2023, Feast of St Matthew Evangelist

Dr György Benyik PhD

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